



## Love styles, criteria of pre and post marriage and communication styles in couples

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### Abstract

Marriage is one of the most important social institutions in all cultures and today societies. The relationship between couples is a permanent exchange of information and messages. Faulty communication is a major cause of the disintegration of a marriage. The purpose of this study was to investigate couples' communication styles with pre-marriage familiar, criteria of choosing spouse in pre and post marriage and love styles among couples. The participants of the current study were 92 couples. Couples filled Communication Patterns Questionnaire, Triangular love scale and criteria of choosing spouse. The results indicated that there are significant differences between criteria of pre-marriage with criteria of post-marriage among men and women. Men had more similarity in criteria of pre and post marriage and fewer changes in comparing to women. Also, there are significantly different in criteria of couples' pre and post marriage that were above 30 years old in marriage. In addition, criteria of marriage in this age category are different with younger ages. Intimacy, passion, commitment and criteria of post marriage have predictive effect on constructive communication styles of couples. The relationship between criteria of the marriage and communication style along with gender differences between couples showed its significance role of these variables in emotional relation kind after marriage.

**Keywords:** Communication, Couples Therapy, Love, Marriage

### Introduction

Marriage is one of the most important social foundations in all cultures and modern societies [1]. Previous studies [2] introduced marriage as a social and legal unit which creates set of rights and social, emotional, motivational and commitment benefits for couples. Some of the family theorists [3] know marriage as the basic relationship and a foundation to provide the

fundamental building family and generation. People benefit from different directions of successful marriage benefits; exactly, for this reason, couples are trying to promote the marriage quality through the creation of constructive and dynamic communication [4]. The relationship between couples is permanent exchange of information and messages and is

created by speaking, writing a letter, the phone conversation, facial and body expressions or other procedures. This information directly transferred by words, expressions, gestures and movements [5]. Faulty communication is a major cause of the disintegration of marriage. To manage the family, a healthy relationship has great importance. When the process of relationship is blocked in any way, the relationship quickly is disintegrated and finally would be disappeared. Love would be reduced greatly where there are no communication skills [5].

Premarital familiarity in different culture is the major factors of choosing spouse, the continuity of marriage and its effect on marital satisfaction and constructive communication styles between the couples. The issue of focusing on the culture elements is inevitable especially in Eastern culture for this content. Based on the results of studies, premarital love and premarital familiarity are contrary to social morality in some communities and sometimes is considered violating the tribal laws because many families and even the heads of the tribes and countries interested in the choice of the other party to the marriage of their children, family's future, tribe such and even to their country [6]. For example, in India even today, preset household marriage is considered the main tradition. Studies have shown that despite the emphasis on the culture and family on the banning of relationships and premarital loves it is still 15% to 30% of young Indian men and 10 percent of women in India are interested in establishing premarital relations [7,8] while more than 90% of marriages in India starts with the emphasis on premarital unfamiliarity and without love [9]. Thus, we can state that marriages and the conditions of girls and boys to engage in this social phenomenon are affected by culture. For example, traditional and Eastern men and women may be limited themselves to communicate formative but the men and women of the Western are more comfort about some issues such as their policy, friends, strengths and weaknesses [10]. Iranian people like India has been faced with limitation,

compliance with attitude, points of view, their family's traditions and religious beliefs, familiarity and premarital love. However, the recent developments in the worldwide in large and small communities in educational area, working have led boys and girls to make inevitable communication and become familiar with the workplace and each other in university. This issue creates background for boys and girls familiarity ethnic and races such as Hebrew, Palestinian and Arabs with different areas of depth political, religious and cultural [11,12]. Therefore, the research on the basis of marriage criteria, choosing of spouse and checking love styles between the couples are better and more efficient than limiting relationship and marriage without being familiar and hidden familiarity from family and society with taking into account the conditions of the world and East communities in the path to join the economic and scientific communities [11,13].

Beginning a relationship is in order to reach a fraction of material and spiritual purposes. Marriage also is looked for different reasons by couples. Some people knew their criteria in marriage based on love and securing some of the material, emotional and motivational needs and some of them knew as a combination of all of these factors. Most marriages in the Western countries are kind of marriage with premarital familiarity with love and sometimes with passion [14]. The results of studies among students of Shiraz University showed that religious factors and then ethics and spouse's behavior were the highest criteria of choosing spouse among men [15]. In various studies the most important choosing of spouse and successful marriage mentioned as having mental health, emotional, affective, consistency in intelligence, commitment, loyalty, tolerance, shared ideas, friendship and intimacy, brotherhood, equality and trust [16,17]. The results of studies showed that affective, emotional, social, cognitive, cultural, sexual and economic factors are the most important issues in choosing of spouse respectively [18-20].

Identify factors in the effective creation, maintenance and improvement the communication styles between the couples such as premarital familiarity, criteria of choosing spouse, components of love in relations of couples have significant importance in marital satisfaction, positive outcomes and sustainable of this social foundation [12]. Beginning the marriage with depth love or only on the basis of intellectual, family pressures, social and political tribal general criteria cannot singly guarantee continuation and positive quality of marriage and relationships between couples. The continuation and quality of marriage definition of marriage are determined by the variety of factors which some of them are controlled and reviewed and some of them are unpredictable. But the important issue is that multiple appropriate criteria in premarital familiarity and establish of emotional interest and emotional-intellectual relationship in couples can guarantee the establishment of constructive and positive communicative pattern in couples. Thus, in the current study investigation of couple's communication patterns would be discussed in the form of premarital familiarity, criteria of choosing spouse and love styles in the couples.

### Method

This study was a descriptive and correlative type. The population of this study was teacher couples in Mashhad city in the fall 2015.

The participants of the current study were 92 couples with mean age 43.31 and mean number of years of marriage 23 that were selected by convenience sampling method. In this research, each couples were asked to respond study's questionnaires separately after a short conversation with the participants, the justification meeting and satisfaction to participate in the study. Inclusion criteria in this study for sample group include being teacher for one of the couples, having at least a Diploma, lack of history of chronic disease in both couples, over at least one year of marriage, living together for least a year in common house.

The research's tools are as follows:

*Communication Patterns Questionnaire (CPQ)*: It is a questionnaire with 35 questions that was developed [21] to examine the marital communication of couples and measure couples' communication patterns with three subscales of mutual constructive communication, mutual avoidance communication and resignation/expected communication. The reliability of subscales of this questionnaire has been reported as 0.50 to 0.78 by using Cronbach's alpha [21]. In order to estimate the validity of this questionnaire in Iran, the correlation coefficients for the three subscales of mutual constructive communication, mutual avoidance communication and resignation/expected communication have been estimated as 0.58, 0.58 and 0.35 respectively with the level of satisfaction. In addition, the reliability of subscales of mutual constructive communication, mutual avoidance, female demand/male withdraw, male expected/ female withdraw obtained by Cronbach's alpha as 0.70, 0.71, 0.51, 0.52, 0.53 respectively [22].

*Triangular Love Questionnaires*: It has 45 questions and three components of the intimacy, passion and commitment. The first 15 questions are related to intimacy, the second 15 questions are related to passion and the third 15 questions are related to commitment. Sternberg identified the eight styles of lovemaking including lack of love, empathy, fascination, love alone, romantic love, emotional love, naively love and ideals love. The reliability of the Sternberg's love triangle questionnaire achieved 0.92 [23]. In addition, validity of the questionnaire was obtained by using the correlation in components with the total score for the three components of intimacy, passion and commitment 0.66, 0.92 and 0.77 respectively [24].

*List of Marriage Criteria*: It is researcher-made checklist for the criteria in pre and post-marriage that includes 11 criteria of love, intelligence, beauty, socialization, commitment, morality, independence, education, temperament, family status and socio-economic class. Each criterion was measured based on a Likert scale ranging from

low, medium, high and very high. To evaluate the reliability and validity of this checklist, firstly marriages criteria was extracted by using the theoretical and research literature and then three psychologists with specializing in the field of family therapy were asked to rate the importance of the criteria. The final form was set with 11 marriage criteria. The evaluation of the validity of this checklist showed that in the premarital stage, Cronbach's alpha estimated the minimum correlation of question with the total score and the maximum correlation with a score equal 0.89, 0.33 (for the criterion of love) and 0.64 (for the criterion of morality) Respectively. The Cronbach's alpha estimated in stage of after marriage, the minimum correlation of question with the total score and the maximum correlation with score of 0.94, 0.45 (for Love criterion) and 0.76 (for the criterion of independence) Respectively. Data analyzed by Friedman Rating Test, Correlation Matrix, Z test, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) in Multiple Regression with SPSS-18.

**Results**

Evaluating the sample's demographic information showed that couples were divided based their marital life as 3 couples with two years (3.3%), 20 couples with five years

(21.7%), 67 couples with ten years (72.8%) and two couples (2.2%) did not specify their marital life. Of the total sample of 44 persons (23.9%) had Diploma graduates, 113 persons (61.4%) with bachelor and 14 persons (7.6%) with master and 13 persons (7.1%) were unknown. 74 persons of this number (40.2%) had premarital familiarity and 110 persons (59.8%) had background premarital familiarity. The mean marriage age group 23.62 (SD= 3.48, SE= 0.26) with a minimum of 16 and maximum of 32 years. The minimum and maximum sample age groups are 20 and 55 years with a mean of 43.31 years (SD= 6.04, SE= 0.45) respectively.

Evaluating the relationship between the criteria pre and post-marriage in 11 indexes of love, intelligence, beauty, morality, independence, temperament, etc. showed that there is significant difference between the criteria pre and post-marriage of the women ( $r= 0.25, p= 0.01$ ) and men ( $r=0.73, p= 0.01$ ). Comparison of correlation coefficients with the Z test showed that there is a significant difference between the criteria of men and women pre and post-marriage ( $Z= 2.44, p= 0.01$ ). Table 1 test showed the results of Friedman rating test to prioritize of criteria pre and post-marriage among women and men in choosing spouse.

**Table 1** *Prioritize of criteria pre and post marriage of couples*

Criteria for pre- marriage		Criteria for post-marriage	
Woman	Man	Woman	Man
Morality	Morality	Commitment	Commitment
Commitment	Temperament	Love	Morality
Independence	Commitment	Morality	Love
Temperament	Independence	Temperament	Independence
Intelligence	Intelligence	Independence	Temperament
Education	Beauty	Sociability	Sociability
Family status	Family status	Intelligence	Intelligence
Love	Love	Education	Education
Sociability	Sociability	Family status	Family status
Beauty	Education	Beauty	Beauty
Socio-economic	Socio-economic	Socio-economic	Socio-economic

The results of evaluation of relationship between pre and post-marriage with components of the love, passion and commitment showed that there is significant relationship in men between

premarital criteria with intimacy component ( $r= 0.25, p= 0.01$ ) and passion ( $r= 0.25, p= 0.01$ ) and for women between the premarital criteria and commitment component ( $r= 0.28, p= 0.01$ ).

There is significant relationship in men between after-marriage criteria with intimacy component ( $r= 0.48, p= 0.01$ ), with passion ( $r= 0.49, p= 0.01$ ) and with commitment ( $r= 0.31, p= 0.01$ ); There is significant relationship between post-marriage criteria with intimacy component ( $r= 0.29, p= 0.01$ ), with passion ( $r= 0.26, p= 0.01$ ) and with commitment ( $r= 0.32, p= 0.01$ ).

The results in Table 2 in order to examine relationship between the communication styles and love components showed that there is a positive significant correlation between constructive communication styles with love component and there is a negative significant correlation between avoidance communication styles with love component.

**Table 2** Correlation matrix between communication styles and love components in couples with gender differentiation

	Constructive communication style		Avoidance communication style	
	Man	Woman	Man	Woman
Intimacy	0.66**	0.63**	-0.29*	-0.24*
Passion	0.52**	0.59**	-0.37*	-0.26*
Commitment	0.54**	0.53**	-0.42**	-0.24*

\* $p<0.05$ , \*\* $p<0.01$

The results in Table 3 in order to investigate the effect of age marriage on the pre and post marriage criteria among couples showed that there is a significant relationship of the effect of age marriage on premarital criteria ( $F(3-174)=5.23, p=0.01$ ) and post-marriage criteria ( $F(3, 174)= 3.99, p= 0.01$ ).

The results of Scheffe test were presented to compare the sample group on the basis of age marriage for pre-post criteria of marriage in Table 4. The results showed that there is a significant relationship between couples above 30 years (for pre-post criteria of marriage) and younger couples.

**Table 3** Analysis of variance to compare the age marriage on pre-post marriage criteria in couples

Criterion	Age of marriage	Mean	SE	df	F	p
Pre-marriage	16-20	33.37	1.02	3-174	5.23	0.002
	21-25	32.83	0.86			
	26-30	31.06	1.33			
	More than 30	42.20	3.29			
Post-marriage	16-20	34.29	7.17	3-179	3.99	0.009
	21-25	35.41	8.82			
	26-30	34.34	8.06			
	More than 30	43.25	8.88			

**Table 4** Scheffe Test to compare pre-post criteria of marriage in couples based on age marriage

Criterion	Age of marriage	16-20	21-25	26-30
Pre-marriage	21-25	0.53		
	26-30	2.31	1.77	
	More than 30	-8.82*	-9.36*	
Post-marriage	21-25	-1.11		
	26-30	-0.04	1.07	
	More than 30	8.95*	-7.83*	-8.91*

The results of analysis for regression in love components (intimacy, passion and commitment), pre and post marriage criteria, age marriage, gender and premarital

familiarity (Having / not having the previous familiarity) on the constructive communication style (Table 5) showed that premarital variables explained 45% of

constructive communication style changes of couples ( $F(8, 155) = 15.64, p < 0.001$ ). Love-intimacy style ( $B = 0.30, p < 0.01$ ), love-passion style ( $B = 0.18, p < 0.05$ ), love-commitment style

( $B = 0.17, p < 0.05$ ) and post-marriage criteria ( $B = 0.26, p < 0.05$ ) have significant predictive effects on constructive communication styles of couples.

**Table 5** Regression of love's components, marriage criteria, age marriage, gender, pre-post marriage familiarity on constructive communication style

Predictive variable	b	B	T	p	R <sup>2</sup>	F	df	p
Constant amount	3.85	-	0.63	0.53				
Intimacy	0.11	0.30	2.96	0.004				
Passion	0.06	0.18	2.13	0.035				
Commitment	0.06	0.17	2.09	0.038				
Pre- criterion	-0.14	-0.14	-1.87	0.063	0.45	15.64	8-155	0.001
Post- criterion	0.26	0.26	3.19	0.002				
Gender	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.993				
Age of marriage	-0.13	-0.06	-0.77	0.439				
Premarital familiarity	-0.38	-0.02	-0.38	0.704				

## Discussion

Family studies indicate wide variation of changes in the extension of pre-marital relations during the past half century. Extension of premarital relationships is the outcome of the sexual revolution in the late 1960's in Western societies [25-27]. However, it is important to take to account that we cannot simply attribute these changes to the tradition, background and history of Western societies and deny the formation of these relations or similar relations in Iran [28]. One of the considerable researches that may be mentioned in this context is the qualitative research [29] that the statistical samples were boys and mostly girls of middle- and upper-class of Tehran and Mashhad. The results showed that many of young Iranians understand the premarital relationship with the opposite sex in the context of healthy and normal relationships. Also, sex uncontrolled in Iran is increasing. The study of adolescents (14 to 17 years) found that more than 20 percent of them had experienced sexual intercourse in their lifetime while 8 percent of them had experienced smoking at that age [30]. Other studies have shown that the 28% of urban adolescents and young adults (male and female) have experienced premarital relationship [31]. In this regard, studies in extensive samples showed that of women who had premarital

relationship with someone other than their spouse in comparison with women who did not have any involvement in the premarital relationship or those did not have premarital relationship with someone other than their wife is more likely their marriage get in divorce [32]. At the same content, the effects of academic achievement on people's attitudes are clear as well, so that individuals with higher education committed lower to the traditional moral issues than those with a low level of education [33].

The result of the current study is consistent with previous studies with love components that showed intimacy and passion in a premarital relationship in men and commitment in women are the important components of relationship. Beside both previous components after marriage, the commitment for men and intimacy and passion for women are the marriage criteria for women. This means we can state that the psychological-emotional space and marriage criteria for women and men are different pre and post-marriage. Studies showed that men more than women felled in love with passion with their biology [34]. The Iran's society has been changed based on culture and value during recent years. One of the issues for youth

is premarital friendship and relationships with a person who may would be spouse in the future. The deep, extensive and variety of friendship can lead to premarital relationship between boys and girls. Mousavi, Nawabi-nezhad and Atef [35] investigated a study which entitled as; Influence of Premarital Relationships With Current Spouse on Marital Conflicts in married students of public universities in Tehran and results showed that conflicts are less among premarital relationship compared to people who do not have relationship. To overall, results showed that premarital relationships variable as important variable has strong contribution to the amount of marital conflict. It can be concluded that a better understanding of the couples based on premarital relationships and more familiarity with personal dimensions, family and other economic issues lead to increase awareness in couples. Thus their married life would be with reduced conflicts. This study also showed that there was a low increase in an emotional reaction between couples who had a premarital relationship with spouse.

Examining the relationship between the communication styles and love components showed that there is a positive significant correlation between communication style of both men and women groups and there is negative significant relationship between avoidance communication styles with love components. The importance of effective communication has been emphasized between the spouses in family by scholars and educators, Erfani [36] explained damaged communication as major cause of defective marriage. The results of this study showed that there is a correlation between constructive communication style with intimacy love in men and women. Companionship love is very important source of satisfaction by women and the strength of marriage. Companionship love provides a content for non-official connections, permanent and intimacy relationship in life. These companionships lead to emotional mutual self-disclosure in spouses; therefore, mutually constructive relationship provides framework for establishing a love and confidence

environment and vice versa. As such the reason we can see in the findings of this study that although the avoidance relationship of spouses increases, couples intimacy also decreases or whatever resignation in marital relationship increases for any reason, love and warmth feeling declines. Intimacy in mutual relationship forms with tender contacts and psychological rewards. It is natural that factors cause resignation and distance particularly among women from a close relationship, the intimacy decreases. The issue of a premarital relationship is a part of essential topics of modern marriage that is beginning point of couple relationship. Unlike general image that marriage is a beginning point of constructive and dynamic relationship or destroyed relationship between couples, premarital relationship can be beginning point of relationship and couple struggling to premarital evaluates criteria and more challenges later in life form during the same period in secret place. So addressing this important issue can start moving a platform to study the communication style and the marriage criteria for and addressing this issue in this study have been with reflection on the importance of this beginning point.

The results of the current study showed that there is a significant relationship in couples over 30 years old in terms of pre and post marriage criteria with younger couples. Marriage criteria in this age category are a little different in quantity and quality than the lower age groups. It seems that the increasing age and mind growth is an outcome of the life cycle of change in the values and beliefs of the affected individuals and couples gain different criteria and beliefs with obtaining more experience and deal with the reality of life. Premarital familiarity and even premarital sex are increasing in the younger generation in Iran [30,31]. Marital satisfaction is one of these factors which play a considerable contribution and role in the stability of marriage. At the Explanation of findings also it can be assumed that despite differences in spouse selection criteria, the couples who are

an applicant for divorce pre and post marriage, focused on process criteria more than content criteria. In fact, those who are an applicant for divorce have less attention to characteristics which include category criteria for spouse selection (such as like personal proportionality, social, nation and religion) compared with people who have a common passion for continuing living.

The results of many studies showed that love is important predictive of happiness, satisfaction and positive emotions. Such results of previous studies [12], based on identifying effective factors in making, preservation and promotion of positive and constructive relationship styles in couples, guided them to the importance of love components in a relationship between couples which the findings of the present study confirmed it.

Among the limitations of this study, it can be mentioned to the type of sampling that was selected by the Mashhad city of in low volumes. The generalization of the findings should be done with caution because of limitations of this city's culture and traditional texture and the availability of samples. Also, because of lack of valid instrument about the pre and post marriage criteria among men and women, it is suggested that a valid instrument can be normalized in the following studies for the specific pre and post marriage criteria between couples with cultural characteristics based on the linear study from engagement until at least 3 years of marriage and this evaluation is done on the comprehensive samples and different ethnics. One of the most important studies on the basis of the marriage criteria and its relationship with the love and relationships styles in couples is comparing young couple with a history of more than 5 years of marriage with their parents. The importance of these studies is that can be showed the movement and cultural changes of values and pre and post marriage criteria in two consecutive generations and it is the step of specifying and showing of being or not being a gap in a generation. This issue can step forward cultural policy makers and family psychologists to modify policy without the involvement of

the path of the chain of value the family and the generation.

### **Conclusion**

With regard to the results of the study on the importance of the passion and intimacy in premarital in men and commitment of women as the important relationship elements, it is recommended to the consultants and family psychologist to pay attention to these factors. Morality, commitment and independence in women, and morality, temperament and commitment in men are the part of first priorities in choosing of spouse. Commitment, love criterion and morality in women and commitment, morality and love criterion in men are the part of first priorities in couples' relationship. It is a natural different point of view pre and after marriage based on the difference in priorities of marriage criteria in men and women. Therefore family psychologists should try to establish and promote constructive relationship style between couples through this key crossing to inform families of this gender difference. Also they should take efficiently and effectively steps in relief of discrete and slender relationship of couples by these facilitator elements of a relationship.

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### **Contribution**

Study design: MH, YV

Data collection and analysis: MH, YV, ZF, FA, MP, SS

Manuscript preparation: MP, ZF, FA, SS

### **Conflict of Interest**

"The authors declare that they have no competing interests."

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